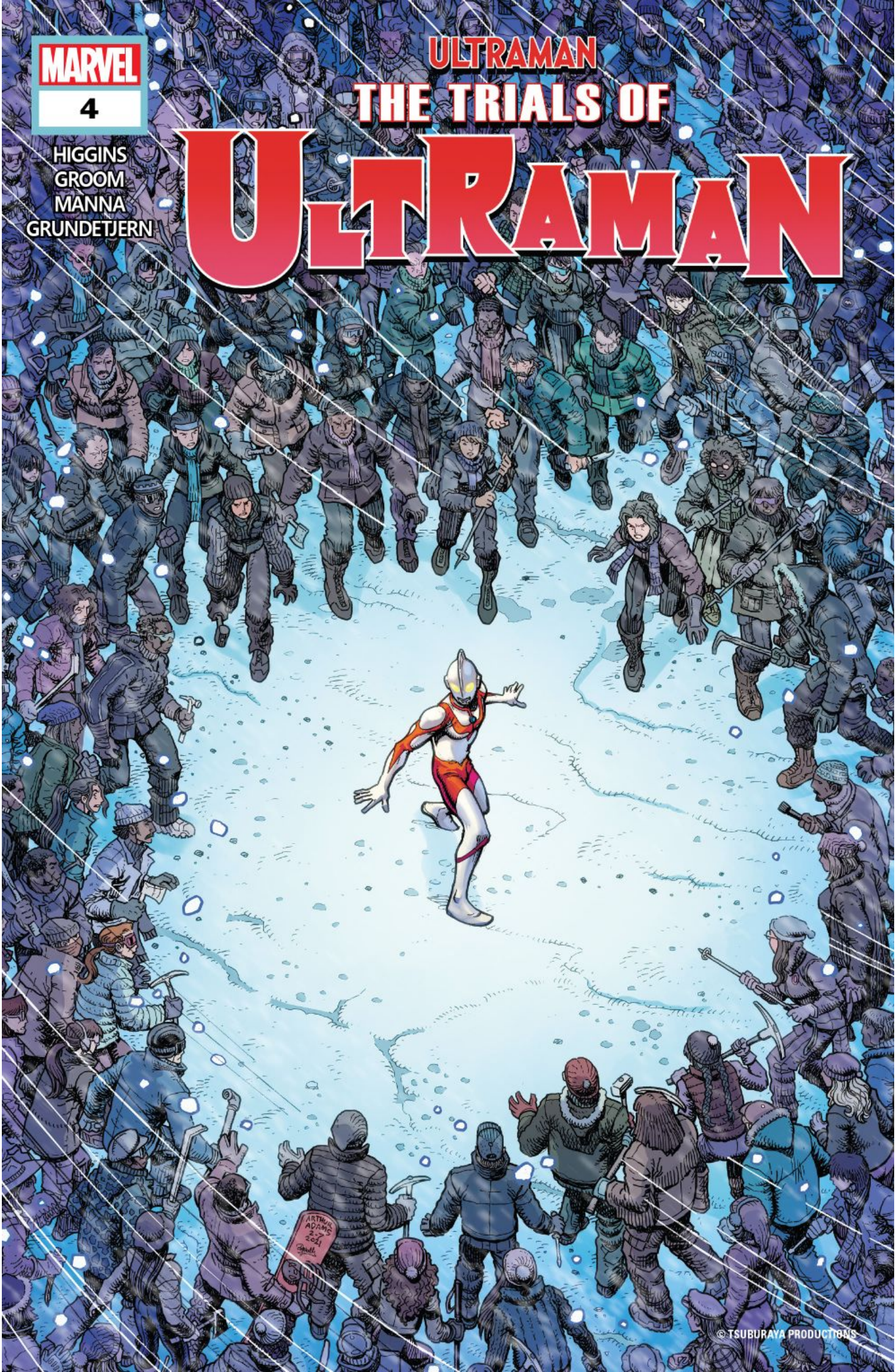
MARVEL
4
HIGGINS
GROOM
MANNA
GRUNDETJERN
ULTRAMAN
THE TRIALS OF
ULTRAMAN
ARTHUR ADAMS
2-7-2021
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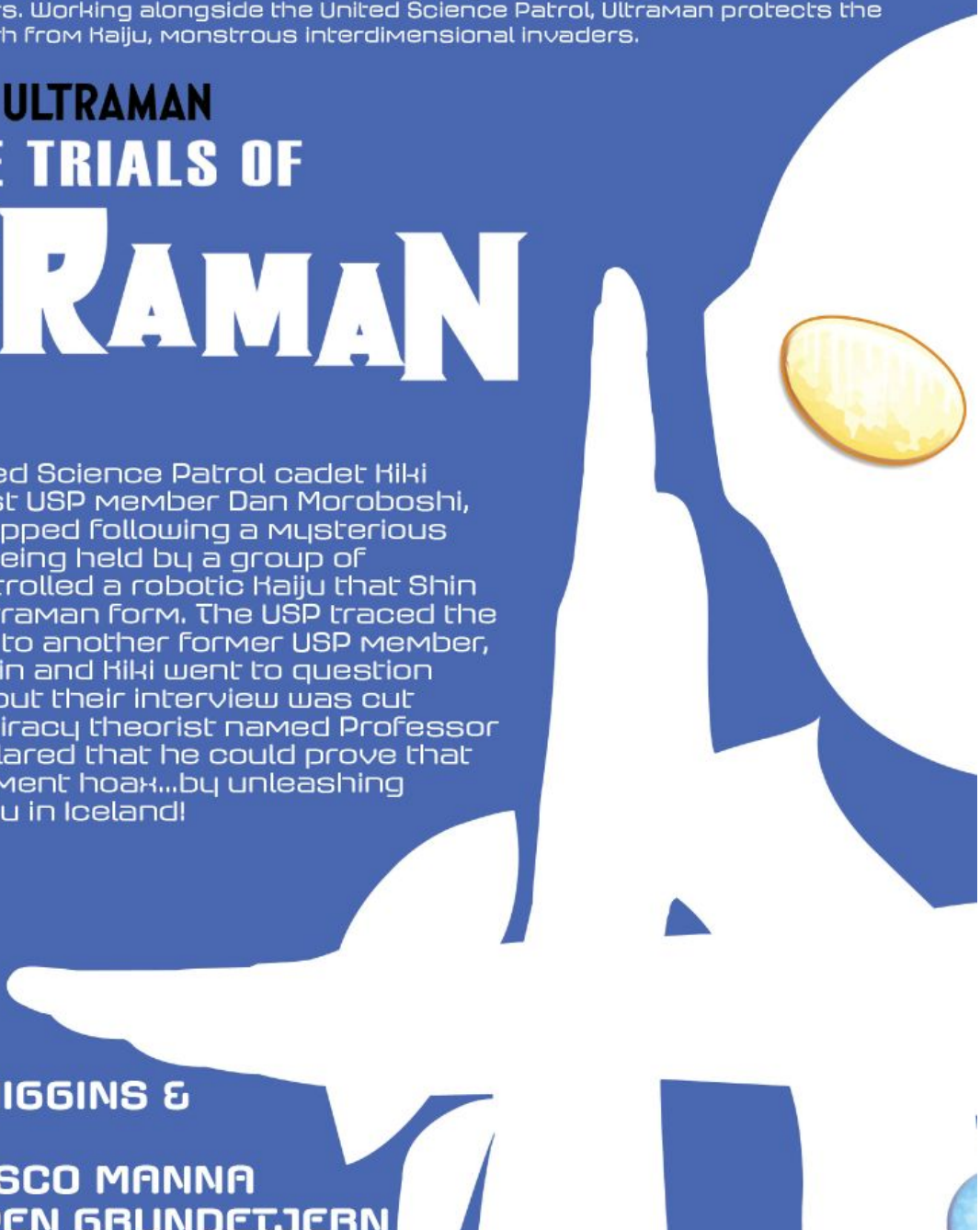
Shin Hayata merged with the alien being known as Ultra to become Ultraman! Using the Beta Capsule, Shin can utilize Ultraman's superhuman strength, flight and energy rays-but only for three-minute increments. Working alongside the United Science Patrol, Ultraman protects the Earth from Kaiju, monstrous interdimensional invaders.

ULTRAMAN
THE TRIALS OF ULTRAMAN



Shin and fellow United Science Patrol cadet Kiki Fuji rescued long-lost USP member Dan Moroboshi, who had been kidnapped following a mysterious absence. Dan was being held by a group of dissidents who controlled a robotic Kaiju that Shin defeated while in Ultraman form. The USP traced the robot Kaiju's origins to another former USP member, Katsuichiro Kato. Shin and Kiki went to question the tech billionaire, but their interview was cut short when a conspiracy theorist named Professor Nikaido publicly declared that he could prove that Kaiju were a government hoax...by unleashing his own artificial Kaiju in Iceland!

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Tokyo.
YEAH, OKAY-- THE DESIGN FEELS A LITTLE DERIVATIVE, BUT THAT THING IS HUGE.
KATO
KYOKO KATO
AND EVERY DAY IT'S OUT THERE IN THE WORLD, IT'S A HUGE PROBLEM.
BUT THIS "PROFESSOR" MADE NO EXPLICIT THREATS IN HIS VIDEO, CADET HAYATA. IF HE IS NOT ATTACKING US--OR, SEEMINGLY, ANYONE ELSE--THEN WHAT GROUNDS DO WE HAVE TO INTERVENE?
HIS WANTING TO "PROVE" THE USP INVENTED KAIJUS BY MAKING A FAKE ONE IS MISGUIDED, BUT NOT NECESSARILY A CRIME...
NIKAIDO IS BRILLIANT, BUT HE'S NEVER BEEN...CAREFUL. AND I GET THE SENSE THAT HE LOVES MEANING SOMETHING TO ALL OF THOSE FOLLOWERS OF HIS.
MY CONCERN IS THAT HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO AVOID LETTING THEM DOWN, EVEN IF IT MEANS COMPROMISING THEIR SAFETY.
MR. KATO'S RIGHT, CAPTAIN MURAMATSU. WE'VE ALREADY SEEN IT--THE DEVICE POWERING THE ROBOT IN AUCKLAND ALMOST WIPED OUT A CITY BLOCK. AND THAT ROBOT WAS MUCH SMALLER.

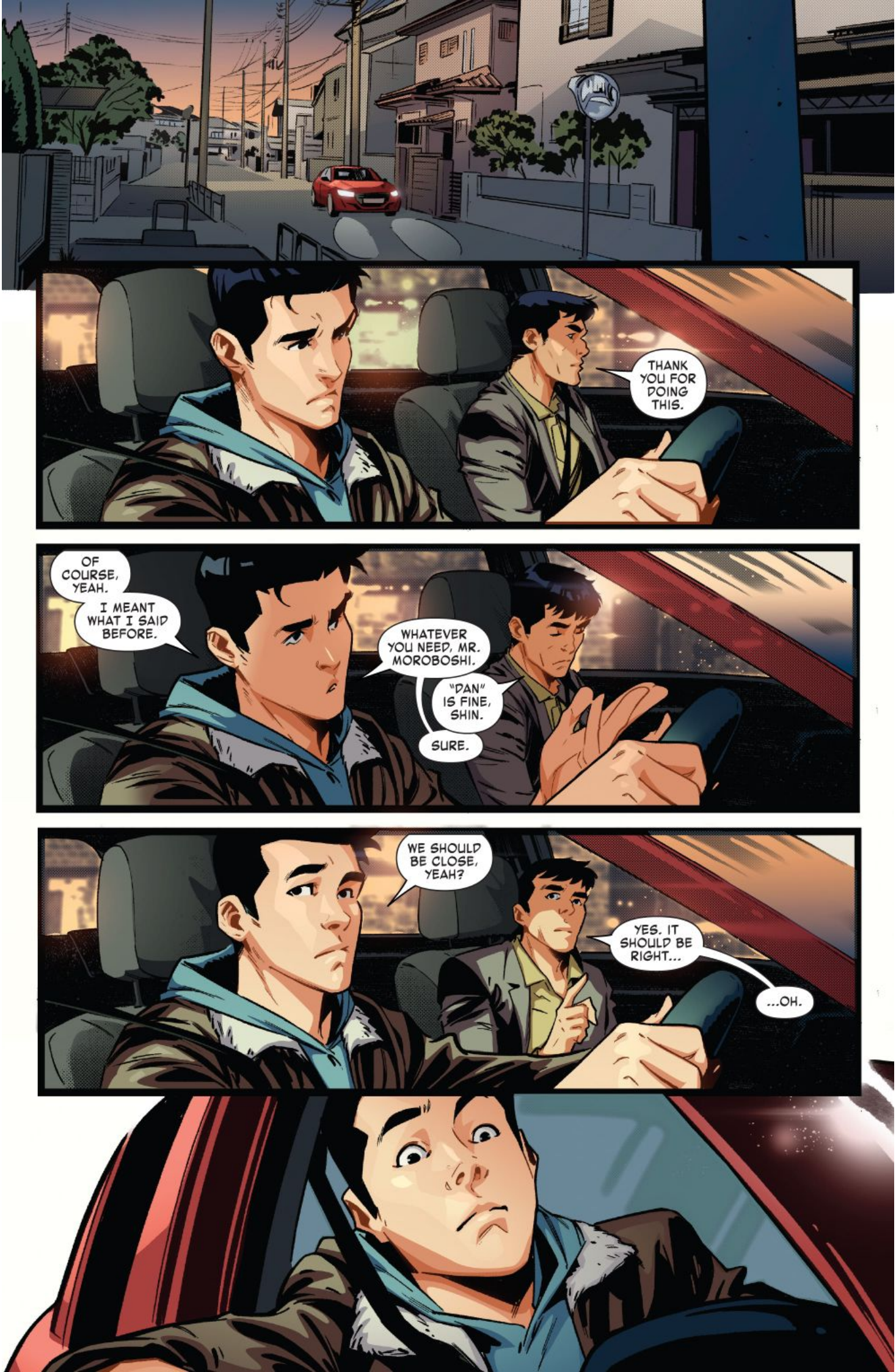
MM.
WHEN IS THIS EVENT IN ICELAND SUPPOSED TO TAKE PLACE AGAIN?
THREE DAYS FROM NOW.
OKAY. WE HAVE SOME TIME TO CONSIDER OUR RESPONSE--IF ANY.
THERE'S ONE THING I DON'T GET THOUGH, MR. KATO--
YOUR COMPANY'S PRIMARY FOCUS IS ON SMALL, CONSUMER-GRADE ELECTRONICS.
WHAT TECHNOLOGY COULD YOU ***POSSIBLY*** HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THAT NIKAIDO WAS ABLE TO--QUITE QUICKLY!--ADAPT INTO GIANT KAIJU ROBOTS?
I'M WILLING TO HELP WITH YOUR INVESTIGATION, CADET FUJI. I AM ***NOT*** WILLING TO EXPOSE THE MARKET-SENSITIVE WORK OF OUR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TEAMS.
UNDERSTANDABLE.
WE'VE TAKEN UP ENOUGH OF YOUR TIME ANYWAY.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE, KATSUICHIRO. TRULY.
COMING OUT TO THE PUBLIC LIKE YOU DID...I HOPE IT GENUINELY IS A SIGN OF YOU ALL TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF. I DON'T ***THINK*** IT IS, BUT I DO HOPE SO.

I'LL TAKE HOPE ANY DAY.
LET'S MOVE OUT, CADETS.

OKAY, THAT WAS INTENSE. THIS WHOLE DAY HAS BEEN INTENSE.
INDEED. YOU'RE BOTH DISMISSED FOR 24 HOURS. GET SOME REST.

HONESTLY, THEY SEEMED PRETTY OKAY.
REGARDLESS, IT SHOULD BE US OUT THERE. NOT THEM.
WELL, WE'RE NOT READY YET. AND THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT THAT.

EXCEPT *GET* READY-- AS FAST AS WE CAN.


THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS.
OF COURSE, YEAH.
I MEANT WHAT I SAID BEFORE.
WHATEVER YOU NEED, MR. MOROBOSHI.
"DAN" IS FINE, SHIN.
SURE.
WE SHOULD BE CLOSE, YEAH?
YES. IT SHOULD BE RIGHT...
...OH.

NOT, UH... NOT WHAT YOU WERE HOPING TO FIND?
MY HOME USED TO BE HERE...
AH, I'M SORRY, DAN...
IT'S FINE. YOU CAN DROP ME OFF AT THE USP NOW. I'M SURE YOU HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO WITH YOUR DAY OFF THAN PLAY CHAUFFEUR FOR A GHOST.
I--
Director Ichinotani
I'M SORRY-- IT'S DIRECTOR ICHINOTANI. I SHOULD--
NO PROBLEM.

HELLO, DIREC--
YOU WERE GIVEN EXPLICIT ORDERS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR--
Calling
Shin Hayata
cadet
--TO CONCEAL YOUR IDENTITY FROM CIVILIANS!
WAIT. WHAT?!
WE INTERCEPTED AN EMAIL. FROM YOUR FATHER. TO THE DAMN SANKEI SHIMBUN!
TELLING THEM THAT YOU'RE ULTRAMAN AND--I DO QUOTE HERE-- "FAR TOO IRRESPONSIBLE TO WIELD SUCH POWER"!
YOU'RE SPYING ON MY FATHER?
WE ARE CONSTANTLY DOING SWEEPS FOR ANYONE PUTTING "ULTRAMAN" AND "SHIN HAYATA" TOGETHER FOR EXACTLY THIS DAMN REASON!
WE ENSURED THIS EMAIL DIDN'T REACH ITS DESTINATION. BUT WE CAN'T DO THAT FOREVER.
CLEAN UP YOUR MESS, HAYATA.

WOULD YOU...LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THAT OR...?
NOPE. NOT AT ALL. WHAT I'D REALLY LIKE TO DO, ACTUALLY, IS THROW MYSELF INTO MY WORK.
WHICH AT THIS MOMENT, SINCE WE'RE HAVING SO MUCH TROUBLE TRACKING DOWN THE OTHER GIANT KAIJU, MEANS DECIDING WHETHER TO PROTECT SOME PEOPLE WHO MOST CERTAINLY DON'T WANT MY HELP AND VERY MUCH THINK OF ME AS THE ENEMY.
I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO THIS.
DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE YOU TRULY TRUST? WHO YOU KNOW WILL SUPPORT YOU?
YEAH. KIKI.

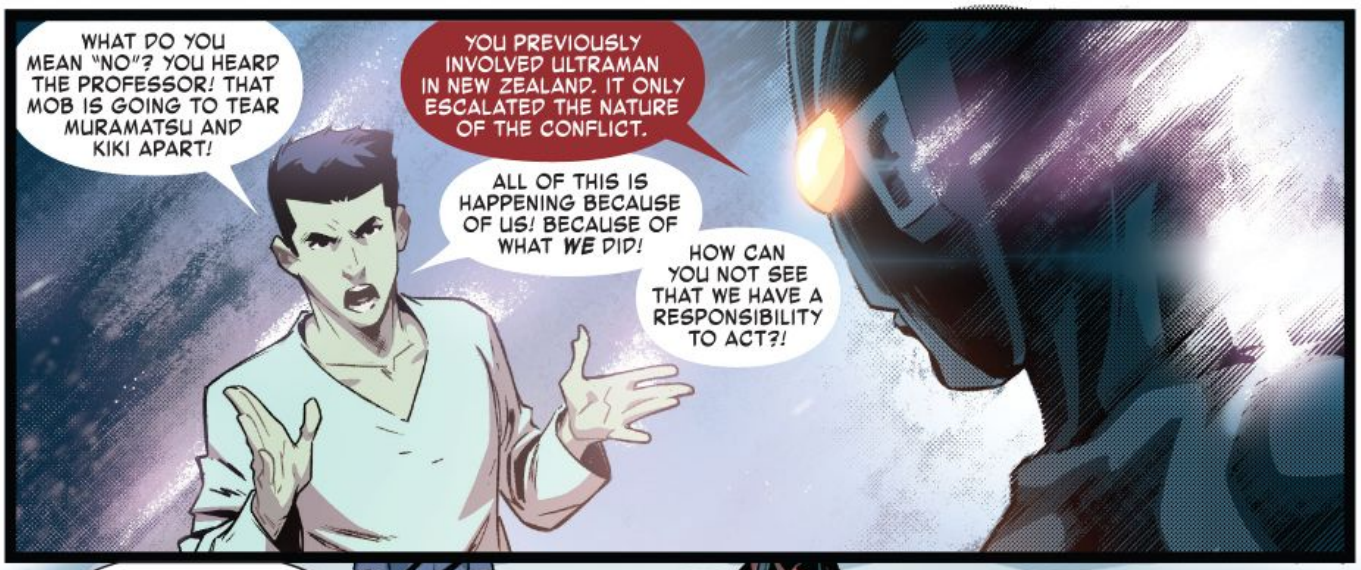
WILL SHE TELL YOU WHEN YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE BUT STILL HELP YOU DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES?
THAT SURE DOES SOUND LIKE KIKI...
WELL, THEN YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE.
I KNOW IT SEEMS LIKE YOU'RE IN A TOUGH PLACE--BUT I PROMISE YOU, I'VE BEEN IN *MUCH* WORSE.
AND IF YOU HAVE A TRUE FRIEND LIKE THAT, IT DOESN'T MATTER IF THE ENTIRE *WORLD* IS AGAINST YOU.
YOU'LL BE OKAY.
DID YOU HAVE ANYONE LIKE THAT...?
YEAH. YEAH, I... DID...
I'M GLAD.

USP Headquarters.
OKAY. LET'S GO TO ICELAND AND SAVE OUR ENEMIES FROM THEMSELVES.
JUST TO SENSE-CHECK THIS: WE'RE OKAY WITH BURNING OUR EXCEPTIONALLY FINITE ULTRAMAN JUICE ON THIS?
NEVER AGAIN WITH "ULTRAMAN JUICE," PLEASE.
ULTRAMAN WILL ONLY BE NEEDED IF PEOPLE ARE IN DANGER. WE'RE NOT GOING TO SHUT THEM DOWN. WE'LL JUST BE... FIRST RESPONDERS. *IF* THEY NEED US.
LOOK, THEY'RE REACTING TO ME. I DID WHAT I HAD TO DO, BUT...THESE ARE THE CONSEQUENCES. SO IT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY.
BESIDES-- WE MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO WIN A FEW OF THEM OVER!
AHH, YOU'RE SWEET. STUPID. BUT SWEET.
I AGREE.
REALLY?
WHAT YOU AND I UNCOVERED TOGETHER, CADET FUJI... IT RATTLED MY FAITH IN THE USP.
I STAYED BECAUSE I BELIEVE WE ARE HEADED DOWN A BETTER PATH NOW. I INTEND TO ENSURE WE REMAIN ON THAT PATH.
BESIDES-- I HAVE NEVER BEEN TO ICELAND. SO, LET'S ROLL OUT, CADETS!
I FEEL LIKE I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE A CADET...
TWO YEARS MINIMUM AT THE CADET LEVEL IS MANDATORY, ***CADET.*** EVEN FOR SUPER HEROES.

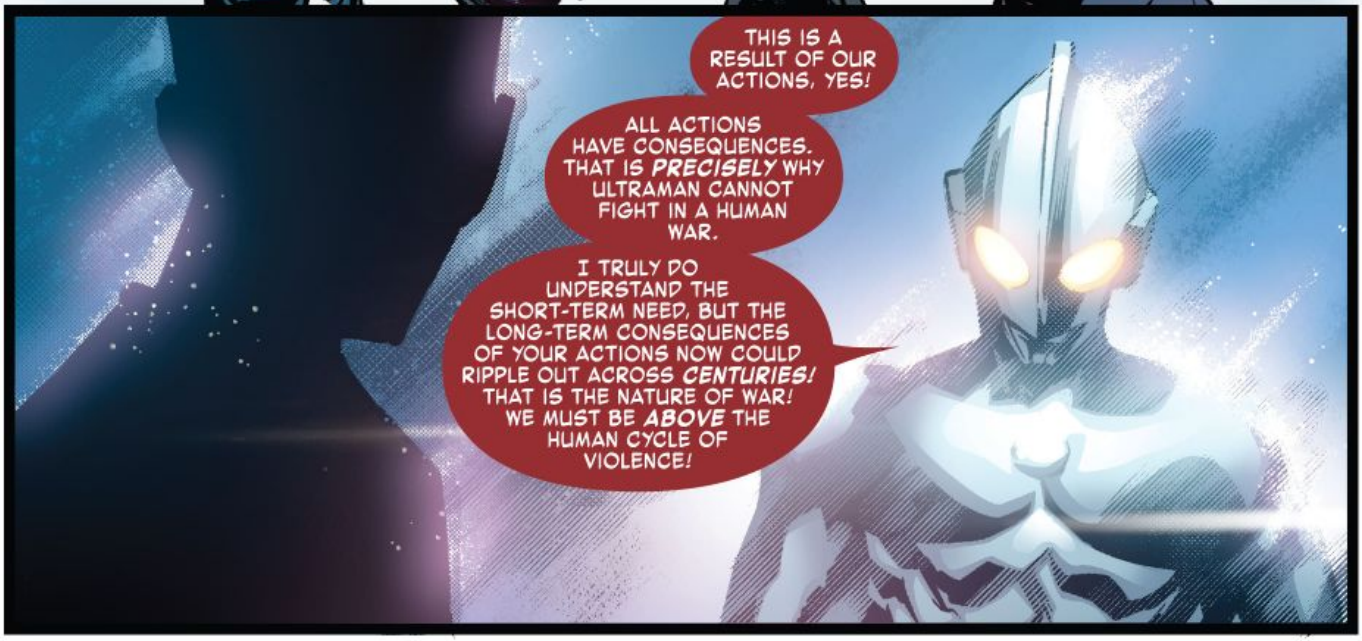
Iceland.
HONESTLY, THIS IS COOL EVEN WITHOUT THE BIG REVEAL. HOW AWESOME IS THIS PLACE?
SPOKEN LIKE SOMEONE WITH MONEY TO BURN... I TOOK OUT A LOAN. BUT IT WILL BE WORTH IT TO SAY I WAS HERE FOR THE START OF THE REVOLUTION.
WHERE *IS* THE PROFESSOR ANYWAY...?
IT'S A GREAT QUESTION. ANYTHING FROM THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW?
NO.
I DON'T LIKE BEING THIS FAR FROM THE ACTION--IT'S HARD TO GET A READ ON ANYTHING.
WE CAME TOO CLOSE TO BLOWING YOUR IDENTITY ON THE LAST OP, HAYATA.
BESIDES...

...IT'S NOT LIKE WE LEFT YOU ALONE.
OH, YES, SPECIALIST IDE HAS BEEN GREAT COMPANY.
THIS IS FINE. THIS IS GREAT!
SO GRATEFUL TO BE JOINING THE FIELD TEAM. LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR VERY SAFE, CONTROLLED THINGS TO HAPPEN!
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING, ALL YOU FAITHFUL!
AND YOU ARE FAITHFUL, AREN'T YOU? SO FULL OF FAITH BECAUSE YOU HAVE WAITED SO VERY LONG! SO MANY ARE WILLING TO CONSUME THE LIES, BUT YOU CAN ONLY BE SATIATED BY THE TRUTH!
WELL, YOUR PATIENCE IS ABOUT TO BE REWARDED. I'M GOING TO PROVIDE INCONTROVERTIBLE PROOF, BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES, THAT THESE "GIANT KAIJU" ARE NO MORE PARANORMAL THAN YOUR KITCHEN MICROWAVE!
FIRST, THOUGH, ONE SMALL BIT OF HOUSEKEEPING--AFTER OUR COMRADES IN NEW ZEALAND FELT THE FULL FORCE OF THE AUTHORITARIANS, WE UPSCALED OUR OPERATIONAL SECURITY.
YOU'VE ALL BEEN FEELING SOME ANGER AT THE USP FOR PERPETUATING THEIR LIES, RIGHT?
WELL, GOOD NEWS--YOU'RE ABOUT TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO VENT SOME OF THAT ANGER...
...BECAUSE WE'RE JOINED BY TWO USP AGENTS TODAY!

I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE THINKING, SHIN HAYATA.
AND I MUST INSIST-- NO.


WHAT DO YOU MEAN "NO"? YOU HEARD THE PROFESSOR! THAT MOB IS GOING TO TEAR MURAMATSU AND KIKI APART!
YOU PREVIOUSLY INVOLVED ULTRAMAN IN NEW ZEALAND. IT ONLY ESCALATED THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT.
ALL OF THIS IS HAPPENING BECAUSE OF US! BECAUSE OF WHAT WE DID!
HOW CAN YOU NOT SEE THAT WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT?!

WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THEM? WHAT CAN WE DO WITH THEM, GIVEN ALL THAT THEY'VE DONE TO THE FABRIC OF OUR SOCIETY?
HEY, UH, SHIN? COULD REALLY USE SOME RED-AND-SILVER BACKUP...


THIS IS A RESULT OF OUR ACTIONS, YES!
ALL ACTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENCES. THAT IS PRECISELY WHY ULTRAMAN CANNOT FIGHT IN A HUMAN WAR.
I TRULY DO UNDERSTAND THE SHORT-TERM NEED, BUT THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS NOW COULD RIPPLE OUT ACROSS CENTURIES! THAT IS THE NATURE OF WAR! WE MUST BE ABOVE THE HUMAN CYCLE OF VIOLENCE!

I SEE SOME WARRIORS HAVE STEPPED FORWARD...
INACTION IS ACTION! IT WILL HAVE CONSEQUENCES TOO!
YES. I KNOW HOW TO BEAR THE BURDEN OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF MY ACTIONS.
DO YOU?
YES! BY DOING SOMETHING ABOUT THEM!
THAT IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE.
BUT IT IS NOW!
THEN DO SOMETHING, SHIN HAYATA.
YOU'RE TELLING ME I CAN'T.
NO, I'M TELLING YOU ULTRAMAN CANNOT...
...BUT I CAN.
BACK RAMP OPENED
ON YOUR KNEES, TRAITORS...

I'M COMING, GUYS! HOLD ON!
UH...I'LL HOLD DOWN THE FORT.
NO, NO, I DO APPRECIATE THE ENTHUSIASM, BUT THAT'D BE AN AWFULLY MUNDANE END FOR SUCH *EXCEPTIONAL* CRIMINALS.
I'M SURE WE CAN THINK OF SOMETHING MORE... *APPROPRIATE.*

WHAT AM I LOOKING AT HERE?
YOU'RE SEEING THROUGH MY EYES--A BROADER SPECTRUM--AND THERE IS AN ENERGY COMING FROM THAT MACHINE THAT I...DO NOT RECOGNIZE.
I'M NOT USED TO YOUR BEING STUMPED...
SHIN, IF I DO NOT RECOGNIZE THE ENERGY, THAT MEANS IT IS NOT OF THIS *UNIVERSE*. WE *MUST* KEEP THIS MACHINE AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE!
ARE YOU SAYING...?
YES!

THE SITUATION HAS CHANGED.
KA KOO

OH MY GOD, IT'S HAPPENING!
THEY'LL KILL US TO HIDE THE TRUTH!
OKAY, SHIN, WE'RE BUGGING OUT!
SKRAAAAH
SCRAWR

STRONG. SPECIALIST?
RIGHT. YES. HELLO, MR. ULTRAMAN. VERY GLAD TO BE PART OF THE TEAM, SIR.
SPECIALIST.
YES! SO-- POWER SOURCE. UNLESS THEY'VE MADE DRASTIC CHANGES SINCE THE PROTOTYPE--
--THEN IT SHOULD BE AROUND THE CENTRAL SPINE. OF COURSE, WE DO KNOW IT GOES, WELL, BOOM, SO...
I SUSPECT THERE'S A CONDUIT, BETWEEN THE SHOULDER BLADES. THAT MIGHT BE SAFER...
KAKRAK
IT IS A GOOD IDEA, SPECIALIST.

WE WILL IMPLEMENT.
SKRAUW
SKRAUW
KASHUNK
THIS IS SPECIALIST IDE. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING--YOU'RE THINKING THAT I REALLY SHOULD HAVE WARNED YOU THAT THERE WAS AN ACTIVE VOLCANO IN THE AREA.
BOOM
WELL, THERE WAS NO VOLCANO. IN FACT, I CAN ABSOLUTELY CONFIRM THAT THERE IS NO POSSIBLE WAY FOR A VOLCANO TO ERUPT HERE AT ALL...
...BUUUUUT I CAN ALSO ABSOLUTELY CONFIRM THAT THERE IS INDEED A VOLCANO ERUPTING RIGHT NOW.
DO WITH THIS ALARMINGLY CONTRADICTORY DATA WHAT YOU WILL!
IT'S NOT JUST THE VOLCANO. REALITY IS DISTORTING...
OHHHHH. OH NO.

GAAR!
GAGRAR!
I--I'VE IDENTIFIED THE NEWCOMER FROM OUR RECORDS! IT'S NOT ANOTHER MECHA! IT'S *ZUMBOLAR, THE WALKING INFERNO!*
TO BE CONCLUDED!

NEXT

It's artificial Kaiju vs. real-deal Kaiju vs. Ultraman--on a shifting battlefield of ice and fire, with thousands of lives at stake! When the smoke clears, will Ultraman be left standing? And if not, will it be because of the Kaiju battle. . . or the unexpected betrayal of a trusted friend?

ZONE